



K A N S A S

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NEWS RELEASE

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Fire barriers help shield homes and businesses from wildfire

Tinder-dry remnants of last season's grass growth in rural and suburban Kansas are a spark away from a wildfire, Kansas Fire Marshal Jack Alexander said today. The fire danger is heightened by the abundant dry grass fuel from last year and persistent drought conditions.

"We're fighting the fire danger on two fronts—by exercising prescribed burns on Kansas rangeland and encouraging 30 to 100 foot fire barriers around homes and businesses," Alexander said. Ranchers are burning grasses on rangeland to encourage vigorous new growth and control woody invasive plants. The fire barriers form a perimeter that slows the spread of fire to homes, farmsteads and commercial buildings.

The fire suppressing benefits of rain and snow vanish quickly with high winds, so the window of opportunity to burn can be limited. Given the forecast of a dryer than normal May-June period, it's better to reduce the amount of dry grass fuel as conditions permit rather than risk heightened wildfire danger this summer.

“The key to protecting your property is to create a defensible space, or fire barrier, against wildfires,” Alexander said. “Your safety and that of your family, however, should be paramount. If a fire does break out, the first step is to report the fire to local authorities.”

The following precautions should be taken:

- Have your fire department’s phone number posted next to your land line phone or programmed into your cellular phone.
- Mow grass very short, and rake and remove grass, leaves and other flammable fuels within 30 to 100 feet of your house. When a fire is deprived of its fuel, it will go out.
- Remove flammable materials, such as leaves, from your roof and gutters. Burning embers can be carried by the wind for great distances and will easily ignite fine fuels.
- Store flammables, such as firewood or lumber, downhill and well away from your home. Closely mow grass around your bulk propane tank and locate it a minimum of 30 feet from any structures.
- Before you burn on your property, check with local authorities to be sure that there is not a burn ban in place and that conditions are conducive to safe burning. If you burn trash in a metal barrel, be sure that it is in good condition and that it’s covered with a heavy mesh screen with holes not much larger than ¼ inch.
- Keep a hose at outdoor faucets to wet down fuels and your roof in case a wildfire approaches.
- Sparks from chainsaws, welding torches and other equipment can cause wildfires.
- Grease trailer wheels, check tires and ensure that safety chains are not touching the ground.
- Never park your vehicle on dry grass.
- If your roof needs to be replaced, consider fire-resistant materials (Class C or better rating), not wood or shake shingles.

Fire sidebar

Fire is a chemical reaction. When fuel, a combustible material, is exposed to heat and oxygen, in the right combination, fire is produced. Take away any of the three components of the “fire triangle,” and the fire won’t burn.